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Ethnogenesis in Amdo Qīnghǎi: historical questions on the development of Salar identity

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The 18th century Xúnhuà Gazetteer cautioned its readers about the Salars:

“The Salar Muslims [*Salā Huízǐ*] have belonged to the Hézhōu *tíng* since the Míng [dynasty], they are one of the nineteen *Fān* [barbarians] who exchanged horses for tea. That tribe is very stubborn and difficult to govern” (*Xúnhuà tíng zhì* = *XTZ* juan 4 ‘zuzhai tun’, in Saguchi 1986:86).

1. INTRODUCTION.

One of China’s national minorities, the Salars (pop. ca. 90,000 in 1990) are a Turkic people in origin who likely migrated eastward from the Samarkand area to the northeastern edge of Tibet as a contingent of the invading Chinggisid army in the thirteenth century. Although we lack historical material to prove a direct link between the Salars of China and the modern Salır-Turkmen, historical, ethnographic, and linguistic evidence suggests that the modern-day Salars of China, like the Salır-Turkmen, originally stemmed from the Salghur Oğuz clan.

Salar society evolved from a nomadic kinship system to a sedentary sociopolitical one. I examine political divisions and naming practices to demonstrate both the ready incorporation Tibetan and Muslim-Chinese into the premodern Salar social structure, and the surprising resilience of Oğuz-Turkic organizational features. This adaptability proved decisive for the formation of a premodern Salar society.

2. BACKGROUND ON SALAR HISTORIOGRAPHY

The earliest written reference to the *Huuchuu Salar* (i.e. the Salars of the former Hézhōu district, which included Xúnhuà) is in the early sixteenth-century *Ta’rīkh-i Rashīdī*; the earliest date that can be associated with the Salars is 1370 (*XTZ*).¹ Although local Chinese and Salar sources describe various Salar migrations through at least Eastern Turkestan and Gānsù, a more westerly provenance of the Salars is

¹ In the following, dynastic years are abbreviated as follows: name, dynastic year, with a Christian-calendar equivalent in parentheses, e.g. Hōngwǔ 3 (1370). Clues about Salar origins are also to be found in the relevant Chinese dynastic histories (*Yuán shǐ*, *Míng shǐ*). Outside of these, the most useful sources are the local primary sources, the *Xúnhuà tíng zhì* (Xúnhuà Gazetteer, here as *XTZ*) from the late 18th c., and two collections of Salar documents (*Qīnghǎi mínzú xuéyuàn mínzú yánjiūsuǒ* 1981a, b).

not mentioned.

2.1 THE VIEW FROM THE EAST

The legend of Salar origins begins near Samarkand, where their clan leader, Garaman, together with his brother, Axman, leads the Salars in an eastward migration. They take with them a white camel, a gourd full of water, and a gourd full of earth. They were told that when they stopped in a place where the water tasted the same, and the earth weighed the same as the water and earth in the gourds they had brought, that they would be in their “ancestral homeland”. One evening, after months and months of wandering, they suddenly lost their camel on a mountainside. At dawn the following day, the Salars found their camel in the middle of a bubbling spring in the valley below. It had turned to stone. When they weighed the soil and tasted the water, it was exactly like what they had brought. The Salars settled there, in the place called *Xúnhuà* (Dwyer 1996, *Xúnhuà Sālāzú zìzhìxiàn wénhuàguǎn* 1988).

The metaphors of water and earth (cf. Ch. *shùitǔ* ‘climate’, lit. ‘water-earth’ (Trippner: 246)) and the camel turning to stone represents the transition from a nomadic to a sedentary way of life (Saguchi 1986), and the first major step to establishment of a local Amdo identity.

The *Xúnhuà Gazetteer* (hereafter *XTZ*) describes the *Sālā’ér* people as living in the *Xúnhuà* area on the western borderlands of Hézhōu, and states that their chief Hán Bǎo submitted to the Míng dynasty in third year of the Hōngwǔ emperor (1370). How long the Salars were in *Xúnhuà* before 1370 is not known; the two most likely possibilities point to either an early-fourteenth-century migration to *Xúnhuà* during the Mongol campaign, or that the Salars went only as far as Hāmì (Qumul) in the 1320’s, migrating to and settling in *Xúnhuà* only at the beginning of the Míng.

The *XTZ* and the Yuán dynastic history (*Yuán shǐ*) describe the Salars as moving from point to point in what is now southern Gānsù and southeastern Qīnghǎi before settling in *Xúnhuà* (Saguchi 1986, Mǐ 1981, Mǐ 1990, Kataoka 1991). In all likelihood the Salar migration was part of the Mongolian invasion which began in Central Asia and extended into Chinese borderlands during one or more eastern thrusts. The Mongols assembled various Central Asian peoples (the so-called *sèmiù rén*) to attack the Tanguts, Jurchens, and Han-Chinese Southern Song dynasty. These troops were accompanied by 30,000 craftspeople, women, and children (D’Ohsson *Histoire des Mongols*). During Chinggis Khan’s 1225-1227 incursion through the Héxī corridor and his further southward thrust towards Sìchuān, troops were sent to *Xúnhuà*, that lay on the western flank of the route, to conquer the area and protect the right flank.² The Salars could well have been part of these troops; they could just as well have come into China after Tamerlane’s sudden rise to power during the fourteenth century.

In any event, the Salars settled in the Amdo region sometime during the early

² In *Xúnhuà* today one can still find the ruins from six watchtowers (*isar*).

Yuán period. The *XTZ* states that in 1370 the first recorded Salar leader, Hán Bǎo, was declared *daruǎci* (seal-keeper), a hereditary position during the Yuán dynasty. The Mongolian principle of rule was based on a mistrust of the Chinese and trust of those who came with them to China, including the Protosalars. While Mongols held the highest positions, the middle administrative positions were held by members of these groups of *sèmù rén*, including the Salars. In the Yuán hierarchy, the position of *daruǎ* (turkicized as *daruǎci*, in Chinese as *dálùhuāchǐ*) was higher as those held by Hán Chinese, but lower as those held by Mongols (*XTZ vol. 5; Yuán shǐ, bái guān zǐ*, cited in Mǐ 1990: 64).

2.2 THE VIEW FROM THE WEST

Although there are no existent historical sources for a Salar migration from Transoxiana to China, genealogies and reports of troop movements support the thesis that the modern Salars in China shared a common origin with the modern Salīr-Türkmen.

The Salīrs are the descendents from the oldest son of Oǧuz khan's fifth son Tekke.³ The name Garaman also appears in the Salīr-Türkmen Oǧuz genealogies: Garaman is the son of Akhal. One further source supports the hypothesis that the two Garamans are the same person: two of the rare Salar documents from the 18th century mention *Garaman deduni* and *Omar deduni*.⁴ Omar was Garaman's son: *deduni* was a hereditary title corresponding to Chinese *dàiyè*. The *daruǎci* Hán Bǎo was Omar's son.

Akhal's son Garaman thus likely lead a number of Salar families to Gànsū in the 13th century. Garaman and his descendants then became *daruǎci*; in 1370, the Salar Hán Bǎo submitted to the Míng. This marked the beginning of the formation of an independent ethnic group.

3. HISTORICAL SOCIOPOLITICAL DIVISIONS AMONG THE TURKMEN

The Turkmen made a general distinction between “inner” (*ig~ichgi*) and “outer” (*tashqi*) clan members (Bartol'd 1929/1963).⁵ This distinction divided the center from the periphery, those with “pure blood” from those with “mixed blood”. The sources do not agree on which clan belonged to which category (what likely reflects different time periods, locales, and clan perspectives); one 16th-century source from Khiva asserts that the “inner” clans were those that lived on the Caspian sea in Mangishlak, while the “outer” clans were the Tekke, Yomut, and Sarīk in North Khorasan (Sarkisyanz 1961: 219). Other historians assert that the “outer” clans were the Salīr, Tekke, Yomut and Sarīk nomads along the banks of the Caspian, while the

³ Cf. Zade F. Köprölü, “Salur”; *Encyclopedia of Islam* IV, and Mǐ 1990: 61.

⁴ The *Salar Book of Miscellany* (*Záxcuě běnběn*) is the only source to mention *dedouni* and *Omar dedouni*.

⁵ Cf. for example Shedžere-i Terakime (: 217) from the 17th c.: “Mangkishlakda Ichki Salurđin bir kishi bir öltürüp qachip....” [They killed one of the Inner Salars at Mangkishlak and fled....]

“inner” clans were the Salīr nomads of Khorasan and Ārsari eastwards towards Khorezm (Kononov, Barthold, Bregel, Dzhikiev, in Clark:4). A late-19th-century Russian source even claimed that those that the “inner” Yomut and Göklen Turkmens called “outer clans” (the Tekke Turkmens) stemmed from captive Iranians.⁶

4. SOCIOPOLITICAL UNITS OF THE SALARS

During the early undocumented period of their ethnogenesis, the Salars moved into the littoral regions on the upper reaches of the Yellow River.⁷ There they took on Chinese surnames and organized neighboring villages into so-called *gongs*, an organizational form unique to the Salars. Each of these Hanafi Muslim communities was composed of group of villages sharing a common main mosque. The formation of these *gongs* strongly resembled the inner-outer distinction of the Central Asian Oghuz. The Central Asian hereditary system was originally preserved in the leadership of these *gong* communities, and later with the submission of the Salars to the Míng dynasty consolidated to one or two leaders under the local *tǔsī* system (a kind of local governor) that the Míng favored. The Central Asian system of hereditary titles (e.g. *khan*) metamorphosed itself first under the Yuán government into a system of administrative titles (e.g. *darūgā*), and thence to another administrative system (*tǔsī*) under the Míng. During the 16th to 18th centuries, with the emergence of charismatic Khafiya and Jahriya Sufi leaders under various associations in the community, the center of political control moved away from the central power of the *tǔsī* system. With the rise to power of Sufi leaders the link of Salar ethnic identity to this Central Asian hereditary system was weakened, and that to Islam strengthened. This development was a source of constant worry for the Míng and Qīng governments.

4.1. SALAR GONG AND TŪSĪ

Since 1730, then, *gongs* were formed from a number of Salar villages in an area, and these were divided into inner and outer *gongs*.⁸ The inner *gongs* were and are still the most central, the oldest, and therefore sociopolitically most important. The outer ones were farther afield (geographically as well as culturally) and “mixed”: they were originally Tibetan areas which had become inhabited by Salars and Muslim Chinese

⁶ N.A. Aristov, 1896: „Zametki ob etničeskom sostave tjurkskix plemen i narodnostej i svedenija ob ix čislennosti” (*Zhivaja Starina*, III-IV: 415-416), cited in Golden: 400.

⁷ The Salars settled mostly in the area of modern-day Xúnhuà and Huàlóng, on the south and north banks of the Yellow River, respectively.

⁸ Before 1730, the principal Salar organizational unit was the village (Sa. *agıl*, Ch. *zhuāng*). Groups of villages organized themselves into *gongs*, which became the basic areal divisions. The Salar population increased steadily so that in the 18th c. there were twelve *gongs* (*Lánzhōu jùnlè*; XTZ; *Hézhōu zhì*).

living side by side with Tibetans.

The origin of the term *gong* is obscure: it is normally written as *gōng* with the Chinese character for “work” (工), but the *XTZ* reports that this was a scribal error for the homophone *gōng* (貢) “merit”. The character for “meritorious service for the motherland” was apparently appended to place names, after the Salars took part in the recovery of Zhuozhi mountain on the side of the Qīng regime in 1730 (*XTZ*, *Huáng Qīng Shǐ Xiàn tǔ*, vol. 5). Other proposed etymologies include Persian *kānt* ‘city, town’ or Arabic *qaum* ‘clan’; these are phonetically and semantically plausible, especially the former.

The outer *gongs* are composed of five community groupings (*taşqi beş gōng*, *wài wǔ gōng*) north of the Yellow River in the former Bayan Rongge, now Huàlóng county.⁹ In the absence of a bridge across the river, the Bayan Salars had little contact with the Xúnhuà Salars. This encouraged the Tibetanization of the Salars north of the river to such an extent that the Qīng government and the Xúnhuà Salars to the south saw their northern relatives as a separate unit. For the government, they were classed as ‘Fān-barbarians’, for other Salars, as “outer Salars”. The Hézhōu Gazetteer (*Hézhōu zhì*) commented:

“Although the Sālā of Bayan rongge worship the same Islam, their language and their dress is completely identical to that of the Fan [Tibetans]. In the old records, there were Tibetan-barbarians who believe in [Islamic] religion. They are known as the outer five *gong* (*wài wǔ gōng*).”

The inner *gongs* (*nèi gōng*) were subdivided into Upper and Lower *gongs*, reflecting their respective position upstream and downstream on the Yellow River.¹⁰ Before 1781 there existed 12 inner *gongs* (six Upper and six Lower *gongs*), but so many Salars were killed during the “great Muslim rebellion” of 1781 that the twelve were consolidated into eight.¹¹ In the late 19th c. a report on Xúnhuà tíng shares the following:

„the Salar Muslims [Sā Huí] of the eight *gongs* are known as the Great Salars. Their customs are despicable and coarse, their weapons effective. The difference between them and the outer five *gongs* is particularly great.” (Zuo

⁹ The five outer *gong* were: Gāndū (Yarluǔ), Kǎligāng (Kargang), Shàngshuǐdì (=modern-day Qúnkè), Hēichéngzǐ (in the *XTZ* as *Zābā gong*), Shíwǔhuí (in the *XTZ* as *Nangsuoduō gong*). In 1958 only ca. 4000 Salars lived north of the Yellow River, most in the Gāndū littoral region (Mǐ 1990: 33, 35). Sixty years later, the Salar population in this region (now Huàlóng county) was recorded as 9077 (according to the 1990 census, data furnished by Huàlóng county).

¹⁰ The upper and lower *gongs* were also known as the *Western Upper Six* and *Eastern Lower Six gongs*. The former group (*Xīxiàng shàng liù gong*) included the village-complexes of Gāizǐ (Sa. *Altıul*), Cǎotǎnběi, Chájǐā (*Cége*), Sùzhī, Bièliè, Cháhàndàsī (*Cagendos*); the Lower or Eastern Lower Six *gongs* (*Dōngxiàng xià liù gong*) included the villages of Qīngshǔi (Sa. *Senger*), Dasugu, Mèngdá (*Munda*), Zhānghā, Naiman (*Kewa*), and Xiécháng (later *Xicháng*), with the regional seat Xúnhuà tíng in the middle.

¹¹ Those which were consolidated into other *gongs* are starred on the map.

wen xiang zou gao xu bian, j51, ‘Shoufu Xunhua ting cheng ci (1874), in Saguchi 1986:97)

The durative power center lay since early Míng times in the hands of the *tǔsī* of the upper gongs, beginning with the leader Hán Bǎo.

The sons and grandsons of the leader Garaman likely settled in the six lower gongs.¹² These settlement legends that trace the origin of the inner gongs to Garaman’s sons show the pride in venerated ancestry that the Salars of the inner gongs had, in contrast to their fellow clan members “without lineage”. Having the proper lineage was prestigious enough to spawn dozens of local variants of this settlement legend, with each locale claiming to have been founded by (often the same) Garaman descendants.

These gong communities adopted a regional hereditary ruling system common to the Amdo Tibetans, the Monguors, and the Salars, with powerful local clan rulers known as *tǔsī*. These rulers mediated between their people and the current rulers of China: the Mongols, the Chinese, and finally the Manchus. Though the *tǔsī* system was in origin a Yuán Mongolian institution (“*tǔsī*” in Chinese sources is derived from Middle Mongolian *tusimel*~*tušimel* ‘minister’), local rulers of all three groups are first mentioned in historical records as submitting to the Míng dynasty. From the perspective of the Míng and Qīng governments, these regimes granted the local rulers patents of office with their status as *tǔsī* and thereby, one can assume, hoped to exert a minimal amount of influence in these borderlands. It served to establish a system of governance, developed agriculture, taxation, commerce, and exert some degree of military control. From a Salar, Amdo Tibetan, or Mongguor perspective, *tǔsī* status legitimized and strengthened powerful local lineages. Among the Salars, all *tǔsī* leaders¹³ took the surname Hán 韓. *Hán*, though nominally sinitic, is derived from the homophonous Mongol-Turkic Central Asian title *Khan* (< **qaǵan*) and shows the lasting prestige of the Mongol past, as well as the position the Salars must have

¹² The overabundance of names for the Salars and for the inner gongs in Míng times provides important clues about the earliest Salar history. After settling in modern-day Gāizǐ (Altıuli), the Salars were known as “the four households and five lineages” (*sì fáng wǔ zǐ*). The “four households” were the families of Garaman’s four sons, who were all surnamed Hán; the term “the five lineages” (not “five tribes”, XHZ j5) was actually shorthand for “the five lineages with external surnames” (*wài xìng wǔ zǐ*), probably those surnamed Mǎ (in any case not surnamed Hán, thus “external”) who belonged to the fifth [?Salar] clan lineage. (The members of these categories vary somewhat depending on the source; in 1958, for example, E.R. Tenishev was apparently told that the “four households” were not limited to the Upper gongs, but were those settled by Garaman’s four grandsons: “Chihtsu” (Chiizi = Munda, thus part of the lower gongs), Qīngshǔi/Senger (also a part of the lower gongs), “Yazi-Yamin” (i.e. Jíshí, the regional seat in the middle, to the upper gongs), Sùzhī (=to the upper gongs) (Tenishev #: 32/59, Kataoka: 32, 49).

The upper-gong villages were known collectively as the “six gates and eight households” (*liù mén bā hù*). These were the families of Garaman’s six sons plus either two Mǎ- and Chén-surnamed households or the household of the second wife of Garaman’s second oldest son (Mǐ 1990: 32). These villages are still found in the Gāizǐ area to this day.

¹³ Salar *tǔsī* leaders are recorded between 1370 and 1898 (XTZ juan 5).

enjoyed under the Mongols.

The Salars of the external gongs have in contrast mostly the surname *Mǎ* (馬). This common surname (also the most common among the Muslim Chinese) is known to be an abbreviated form of Muhammed.

As heads of local lineages, the local *tǔsī* leaders of various *gong* areas were hierarchically classified into *houses*, i.e. lineages. The oldest and most significant distinction was the division of the inner *gongs* into main and secondary houses (*zhǎngfáng*, *cífáng*~*èrfáng*). The main house *tǔsī*, as propagator of the first (Garaman) Salar lineage, formed the center of power of Salar society in the Míng dynasty; not coincidentally, this center was located in the area of the stone camel, in Gāizǐ/Altıuli *gong*. Under main house jurisdiction were also the second and third Salar lineages (*sānfáng*, *sìfáng*). The secondary house *tǔsī*, established first in 1552 (XTZ *juan* 5), was responsible for the fifth Salar lineage, that is, responsible for administering the outer five *gong*. The higher-prestige main house included the upper *gongs* (except for the hopelessly distant Cháhàndàsī/Čağendos *gong*) and the centrally-located lower *gong* Qīngshǔi/Senger.

4.2. PERSONAL NAMES

We have just seen that the first documented Salar names originated in Central Asia and make a migration together with the Mongols likely. First, the ethnonym *Salar* itself¹⁴, as also with the legendary *Garaman* and *Axman*.¹⁵ *Axman* is most likely an analogy-formation from *Garaman* – as with the Mongolian surname *Hán* (*Khan*).

That the surname *Mǎ* appears in historical sources since the Qīng indicates that the Salars identified increasingly with Islam, and that numerous Muslim Chinese from Hézhōu came northwest over the mountains to Salaristan and intermarried with local Salars.

There is a certain relationship between surnames and *gong*-status¹⁶: in the outer *gongs* (those also known as *wài wǔ xìng* “the external five surnames”), the

¹⁴ The term *Salır*/*Salur* is derived from *Salğur*. The low vowel in the second syllable likely reflects the development of *-(g)or* > *-(g)ur* ~ *-(g)ar*; cf. the alternation of *-ğuz/-ğar* in ethnonyms, e.g. O-ğuz, Uy-ğur, ?Ab-khaz, Bul-gar.

¹⁵ The suffix *-man*, likely derived from Persian *ma:nand* ‘resembling’ (al-Kashgari’s 11th c. etymology), occurs with only one Turkic group, the Oğuz (SW Turks): the ethnonym Turkmen ‘those looking like the most Turkish of the Turks’, and the personal name Qaraman/Garaman. The latter (‘resembling-black’, ?< black-surnamed Oğuz?) occurs in several Anatolian and Balkan communities and as an Oğuz hero in the Dede Korkut cycle. Its appearance as the name of the Salar progenitor supports an Oğuz origin for the Salars.

Axman, who appears only in some Salar sources (and no Arabic or Chinese sources) as the brother of *Garaman*, reflects a later parallel form to *Gara-man*: *Ax-man* ‘resembling-white’.

¹⁶ Although the surname *Hán* dominates in certain of the inner *gongs*, within the Upper and Lower inner *gongs* no correlation can be found between Upper and *Hán* and Lower and *Mǎ*; the surname *Hán* dominates in Gāizǐ, Sùzhǐ, and Qīngshǔi, while the surname *Mǎ* predominates in Bièliè, Chagendos (=Upper) and *Naiman, Zhangha, and Mengda (=Lower).

surname *Mǎ* dominates; it also frequently (51%) appears in Qīng dynasty troop reports. This reflects the Qīng regime's profound mistrust of the “real” (i.e. Hán-surnamed) Salar. Today – although to the Salar the name Hán still is the most prestigious – the surname *Mǎ* dominates. Salar surnames thus had in all likelihood the following evolution: no surname (only a clan name, e.g. *garamanli*?) > only Mongolic Hán (< *khan*) > both Hán + *Mǎ* (and others, e.g. *Chá*) > overwhelmingly *Mǎ*. Salar surnames reflect migration patterns due to marriage, commerce, or religion.

The development of Salar given names also reflects the inner/outer distinction. Between the 18th and 20th centuries, males had one given name based either on birth-order (e.g. Hán Èrge ‘Hán the Second’), on the age of a grandfather when the boy was born (Sū Sishīsān ‘Su 43’), or based on an Islamic name (‘Hán Rahman’).

Sometimes Chinese surnames and given names would be taken on, e.g. *Mǎ Múnnyí* (*Mǎ Wényí*). These latter names had and still have currency in a public, official context. Today, this custom has become widespread and systematized as an abstracter form of the inner/outer split: most all men have a Quranic name (*jīngmíng*) used at home, and an official Chinese name (e.g. *Mǎ Déyuán*/Junus); women mostly have only an “inner” name, that usually is not Islamic, e.g. *Sōjagu*, *Gahcux nenu*, *Linto*.

4.3. AĞINA-KUMSEN

Smaller forms of social organization – in contrast to the inner and outer *gongs* – in part more closely resemble local Tibetan and Chinese social structures. The smallest and likely earliest (Turkic?) structure is based on patriarchal clan relations and is called *ağina* (from Old Turkic *ağa* ‘older brother’ + *ini* ‘younger brother’); intermarriage between *ağina* members is forbidden. Later, semi-formalized non-kin bonds developed between neighboring families based on the principle of mutual aid. Members of such groupings of neighbors celebrated and observed rites of passage together, had a common graveyard, and enjoyed trading advantages with each other.

Such neighbor-associations are known as *kumsen* or *čimsen* ‘relative’, from Amdo Tibetan *čemtsan* [tɕʰəmɕtsʰaŋ] ‘family, household’. This reflects the Salar adaptation of a local Tibetan social structure.¹⁷ *Kumsen* and village names are generally based on topographical features and on clan names of Bodic, Chinese or (less often) Turkic origin.¹⁸

¹⁷ For example, the main village (*Dàzhuāng/Ullāgel*) of Munda – one of the four lower *gongs* – in 1999 had six *kumsen*, each including an average of 25 families (*Mǎ Yīnglù* (a Munda Salar) 1999, p.c.).

¹⁸ There are relatively few Turkic village names (as in e.g. Munda ‘here’, Agashli ‘wooded place’); instead, Tibetan and Chinese names dominate (Tansekan ‘flat bank’, Gaizi ‘street/market’, Chiizi ‘market’). Rarely, Arabic (Yimamu = Imam) and Mongolic names (Naiman) can be found. In addition to the monolingual place-names there are also those of mixed origin, e.g. Bayan rong (Mong. ‘rich’ + Tib. ‘valley’). Most areal centers (which correspond to some of the former *gongs*) have both Chinese and another (Turkic or Tibetan) name: Gāizi/Altıli, Qīngshǔi/Senger, Gāndū/Yarlugu.

4.4. CONTEXT-DETERMINED LANGUAGE USE

As one would expect from a trilingual group, each language is employed in a different area. Salar is spoken at home; in public, the Salars speak Salar among themselves and Chinese and Tibetan to others. In this way Salar has remained an internal language separating different spheres of life, and has served to preserve a distinctly Salar identity.

Notably, Salar children living on the north bank of the Yellow River speak Tibetan among themselves, even when no Tibetans are present. In this once-Tibetan area, Amdo Tibetan has become the internal language also for Salar children.

5. SUMMARY

In the above remarks I have shown – particularly from examples of different language use in specific environments – that the use of Salar as an internal or “inner” jargon in the linguistic realm echoes a larger Salar social structure. The central theme here, then, is the conscious distinction between the internal and the external at many levels of society. If the dichotomy indeed began at the macro-level with Oghuz clan divisions, then an entire social system may have been cast out of the *gong* system. The “inner” and “outer” of the *gong* system is the uniquely Salar form of a center-periphery structure.

The modern “doubled” personal naming system of the Salars also reflects this sharp delineation between the internal and external: Turkic or Islamic names for the inner, family realm while Chinese names elsewhere. Salar personal names, titles, and toponyms also nicely reflects important stages of Salar history and the groups they came in contact with: in personal names, Mongolic or Turko-Mongolic titles and names (*aǵına*, *daruǵaǵı*, *khan/Hán*, *tǔsı*) represent the oldest layer, while Qīnghǎi-Gānsù Islamic and sinitic names are a later but much more dominant layer. Intensive contact with Amdo Tibetans is revealed principally in the crucial Salar adaptation to the supra-kinship organization of *kumsen*, and secondarily in the abundance of Bodic toponyms in what is now Salar country.

The Míng-Qīng period was the crucial time period for the coalescence of Salar identity. Central Asian Oghuz structures, particularly the inner/outer dichotomy, were refined to accommodate a local identity in Amdo Tibet. With the integration of the Salars into Sufi saintly lineages (*menhuans*), this identity had become spiritually Islamic, but organizationally a blend of Turkic, Tibetan and Mongolian social and political structures. Although their central identification with Islam weakened Salar ties to these secular sociopolitical structures, the resultant strain on the Salars’ relationship with the Míng and Qīng governments only served to solidify an independent identity.

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